

Appl. No.: 09/656,678
Filed: September 7, 2000
Amdt. dated 01/18/2006

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the thorough examination of the present application, as evidenced by the final Official Action. Applicants also appreciate the Examiner taking the time to conduct a lengthy telephone interview with Applicants' undersigned attorney regarding the first Official Action. The final Official Action continues to reject Claims 1-3, 5-7, 11-14, 16 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,222,535 to Hurd, II. In addition, the final Official Action continues to reject Claims 4, 8-10, 12 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Hurd patent.

In response to the final Official Action, Applicants have amended Claims 1, 3-7, 10 and 11, cancelled Claim 9, and added new dependent Claims 18 and 19, to clarify the claimed invention. In addition, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 5, and added new dependent Claim 20 (depending from amended independent Claim 11), to further define the claimed invention. More particularly, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 5, and added new dependent Claim 20, to further recite that issues and comments corresponding to the issues are received for posting on a discussion-capable electronic media, that the originating entity comprises an aircraft manufacturer, and that the set of resolution directions (sent to the customer or originating entity for conducting a resolution investigation) includes a suggested cost for resolving the issue. Applicants respectfully submit that these limitations, as acknowledged by the Examiner during the telephone interview, patentably distinguish the claimed invention of amended independent Claims 1 and 5, and by dependency Claims 2-4, 6-8 and 10, as well as new dependent Claims 18-20, from the system and method of the Hurd patent. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 1-8 and 10 as being anticipated by or unpatentable over the Hurd patent are overcome, and that Claims 1-8, 10 and 18-20 are in condition for immediate allowance or indication of allowability.

Notwithstanding the above-identified amendments, Applicants respectfully submit the claimed invention of the present application, and as explained below with respect to independent Claim 11 which has not been amended in view of the rejection thereof, is patentably distinct from the Hurd patent. In view of the amendments to the claims and the remarks presented

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herein, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all of the pending claims of the present application.

As indicated above, the final Official Action rejects all of the pending claims as being anticipated by or unpatentable over the Hurd patent. As explained in response to the first Official Action and during the telephone interview, the Hurd patent provides a system and method for facilitating issue tracking. As disclosed, the system and method utilize a series of graphical user interfaces (GUIs). A first GUI has a first plurality of information accepting fields operable to accept information defining the issue from an originator, including a relative priority of the issue. In response to entry of such defining information, the information is sent to an assigned party, or can alternatively be placed in a hold state or voided. Once the information is sent to an assigned party, however, the assigned party uses a second GUI (also including a second plurality of information accepting fields) to enter information related to a proposed resolution of the issue. The information related to a proposed resolution of the issue is then forwarded back to the originator to make a determination of whether the proposed resolution is satisfactory.

Amended independent Claim 11 of the present application provides a method of collaboratively identifying, prioritizing, and resolving issues affecting a series of similar complex systems, where the method is implemented over a computer network. As recited, the method includes receiving issues and comments corresponding to the issues from a customer or an originating entity administering the series. In this regard, the issues and comments are received for posting on a discussion-capable electronic media configured to have a plurality of issues and a plurality of comments posted thereon. After an issue is posted, the method includes a number of steps performed by a committee including a customer representative and an originating entity representative.

As further recited by amended independent Claim 11, the steps performed by the committee include separating the posted issues into rejected issues and action issues based on the posted comments, prioritizing the action issues, and assigning an action issue to an assignee comprising the customer or the originating entity, where the assignee is responsible for developing a resolution proposal for resolving the respective action issue. The committee sends

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the action issue to the assignee along with an associated set of resolution directions that includes issue-closure criteria to be met by the resolution proposal for the action issue. The committee then receives a resolution proposal for the action issue from the assignee, and evaluates the resolution proposal with respect to the issue-closure criteria.

In addition to the reasons presented in response to the first Official Action, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention is patentably distinct from the Hurd patent as the Hurd patent does not teach or suggest a system or method generally including a customer, originating entity and committee including representatives of the customer and originating entity collaboratively identifying, prioritizing, and resolving issues. More particularly, in contrast to amended independent Claim 11, and similarly the claimed invention of amended independent Claims 1 and 5, the Hurd patent does not teach or suggest the customer or originating entity posting issues and associated comments to a discussion-capable electronic media, which is then accessed by the committee for assigning the customer or originating entity to conduct a resolution investigation on one of the issues (an action issue). As disclosed by the Hurd patent, an originator both opens an issue and assigns the opened issue to an assigned party, which then proposes a solution for review/acceptance by interested parties (originator, assigned party, etc.). In the claimed invention, and considering only for the sake of comparison that posting an issue corresponds to opening an issue, an originator (customer and/or originating entity) opens an issue, but another entity (i.e., a committee including representatives of the customer and originating entity) assigns the open issue. Further, nowhere does the Hurd patent teach or suggest that the originator (i.e., the party that opened the issue) may also be assigned to solve the issue, in a manner similar to the claimed invention reciting that the customer and/or originator post the issue that either the customer or originator is assigned to conduct a resolution investigation on the issue.

Further, as previously explained, as the Hurd patent treats each issue individually as to it being opened or assigned to another state, the Hurd patent also does not teach or suggest separating a plurality of issues posted on discussion-capable electronic media into action issues and rejected issues, as recited by amended independent Claim 11, and similarly amended independent Claims 1 and 5. The Hurd patent does disclose that an issue may be placed in a

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number of different states, including an open state for a newly created issue, an assigned state for an issue assigned for resolution, and a closed state for an opened issue for which a proposed solution has been accepted. In addition, an issue may be placed in a hold state for an issue put on hold to be subsequently reopened, and a void state for an issue for which a solution is never implemented. It could be suggested (although expressly not admitted as such) that the disclosed open or assigned issue corresponds to the recited action issue, and that the disclosed void issue corresponds to the recited rejected issue. Even in such an instance, however, the Hurd patent does not disclose separating a plurality of issues into open/assigned issues and void issues in a manner similar to separating issues into action issues and rejected issues, as in the claimed invention.

Applicants therefore respectfully submit that the claimed invention of amended independent Claim 11, similarly independent Claims 1 and 5, and by dependency Claims 2-4, 6-8, 10 and 12-20, is patentably distinct from the Hurd patent. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 11-17 as being anticipated by or unpatentable over the Hurd patent are overcome.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments to the claims, the newly added claims, and the remarks presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. As such, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested. In order to expedite the examination of the present application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney in order to resolve any remaining issues.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,



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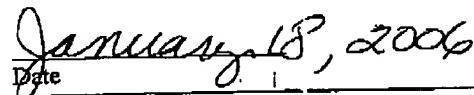
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